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Roddenbery Memorial Library Book Talk with Author Robert Gwaltney

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Cover Page Footnote

Shelly Searcy was the photographer.

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In today's digital age, libraries are often encouraged to provide more than just books. The Roddenbery Memorial Library offers art classes, music lessons, technology sessions, crafts, a plant exchange, various park passes, and much more. Of course in addition to books, the library has much to circulate like newspapers, magazines, movies, Chromebooks, hotspots, and even ukuleles. But on Saturday, March 5, 2022, the library in the quaint town of Cairo, Georgia, hosted over 60 people to celebrate a book: local author Robert Gwaltney's debut novel *The Cicada Tree*.

The worry of inviting an author to travel four hours from his current residence in Atlanta to his hometown library to have no one show up to the event immediately dissipated. The crowd of fans, friends, and family filled the auditorium to capacity and overflow guests had to watch from the south hall. And Gwaltney was excited to be home. The day before, he was so thrilled to see his name on the sign outside of the library he posted a picture to his Facebook page. And moments before the program began, he uploaded and shared videos of the library's courtyard and display of cicadas advertising the event with his followers.

It was not like most book signings held at the library. Instead of just standing at a podium as the audience merely listened, Circulation Assistant Audrey Anderson facilitated a Q&A interview format with the author after Library Director Janet Boudet's introduction. It was both interactive and funny. At one point while excerpts from *The Cicada Tree* were read, you



Author Robert Gwaltney

could hear a pin drop. At the end of the reading, a couple of ooohs and awws were heard from the audience. Perhaps it was the author as well as the forum that had everyone mesmerized. Gwaltney answered questions about growing up with his three younger brothers, who were all present at the book signing. He talked passionately about *The Cicada Tree*—his language as descriptive as the prose in his debut novel. He named authors that had been an influence in his writing, and he engaged with the audience, which was full of people who were proud of him and anxious to say so. Attendee Melanie Duncan said, "It was magic."

Audrey Anderson is a library assistant at Roddenbery Memorial Library